ASHFORD YOU

Issue 25 | Summer 2025

YOUR BOROUGH, YOUR MAGAZINE



WHAT'S ON THIS SUMMER

Where to go and what to do in the Borough

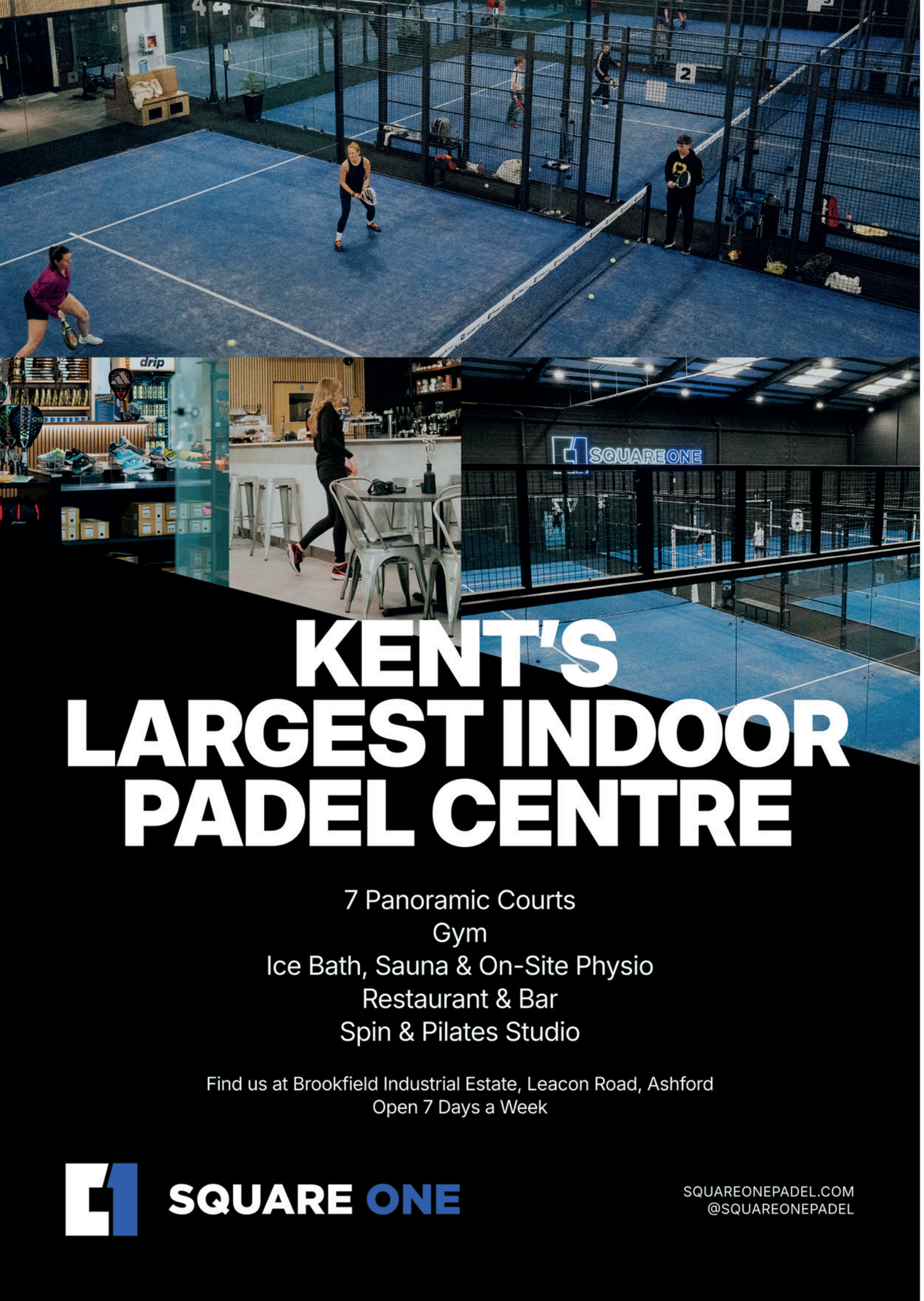
ASHFORD TOWN CENTRE IN FOCUS

COMMUNITY AWARDS 2025 LAUNCHED

WIN

- Wine tour and lunch for two at Gusbourne vineyard
- Family day tickets for Biddenden Tractorfest 2025

Ashford Borough Council



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Welcome



Welcome to the latest edition of ***Ashford For You.*** There is much discussion currently about local government reorganisation, after the government in Westminster set out its ambition to restructure local government to ensure more efficient and high-quality public services. The government has not mandated a fixed model, allowing flexibility for local authorities to determine the most effective structure. However, they expect Kent's councils to collaborate on a shared vision for this reform.

The timetable includes a period of public consultation and I would urge readers to take the opportunity to have their say in how best local government can be reshaped to create cost-effective, resilient, and high-quality public services that will serve Kent's communities for generations to come. See our feature on p7 for more details.

Our What's On feature is bursting with great places to go and things to do this summer and autumn, while we also turn the focus on Ashford's town centre. Our resurgent cinema continues to attract lots of customers, both old and new, while investment in the new Playtrain near the bandstand is proving a big hit with younger visitors to the town centre. We also have the latest on plans to redevelop Park Mall.

There is also news about a bold initiative to unlock new housing development on hold due to the 'Stodmarsh' nutrient neutrality problem, a spotlight on wellbeing in our communities, an update on expanding our electric vehicle charging network and the launch of the Ashford Community Awards 2025. Oh and not forgetting more competitions with the chance to win great prizes. It really is a jam-packed magazine – I hope you enjoy reading it!

Tracey Kerly

Tracey Kerly
Chief executive, Ashford Borough Council



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or write to us at the above address.
Find your borough councillor: **www.ashford.gov.uk/councillors**

Please note: To contact us regarding a specific council service, visit **www.ashford.gov.uk/contact-us** and select the relevant category relating to your query.

£2.2m GSHP scheme changing tenants' lives

Residents in around 60 council homes are having their lives changed and bills reduced thanks to ground source heat pumps (GSHPs) in Appledore and Charing. The £2.2m scheme is the first time the council has installed GSHP heating systems in residential properties and is part of a bigger drive to retrofit around 700 homes with energy-saving measures.

Embracing ground source heat pump technology will transform tenants' lives by boosting energy security, saving money and providing a warmer and more comfortable home for them to enjoy. The upgrades to our most energy-inefficient rural homes will also help the council with its ambition to become a carbon neutral borough by 2030.

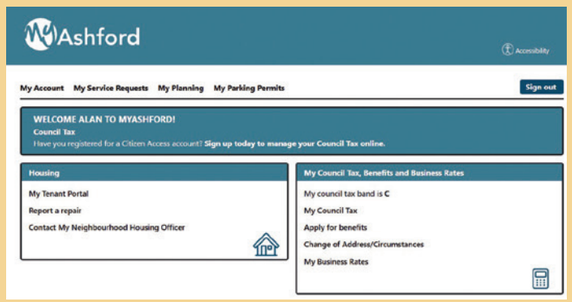
Installing the hi-tec low-carbon systems involves drilling multiple bore holes to depths of around 100 metres. We are working with British GSHP specialist Kensa to deliver the project. The ground source heat pumps are being fitted at homes in Heathside and Hawthorn in Appledore and Clearmount Drive in Charing, replacing the existing mix of oil-fired, electric and gas heating systems.

GSHPs are a highly efficient low-carbon heating system that harnesses natural, freely available heat stored in the ground. Multiple boreholes are drilled deep underground and fitted with a network of pipes. A mixture of water and antifreeze circulates within these pipes, absorbing the natural heat from the earth. This mix is then passed through the heat pump, which compresses and enhances this energy so it can heat the water used in the home's radiators and hot water systems.



Managing your ABC services

Did you know that thousands of residents are signed up to our MyAshford and Citizen Access online customer portals? Registering once will allow you to view all your council tax bills, update personal details, find out about discounts and exemptions you may be entitled to and more. Visit **www.ashford.gov.uk/myashford** where you will find tutorial videos with step-by-step instructions on how to sign up.



Be part of your community

The North Willesborough Community Forum recently relaunched and already has more than 200 followers using its Facebook, website or direct mailing list! To get involved join our Facebook Group (North Willesborough Community Forum) or visit their website **NWCFAshford.com** where you can join their mailing list. You are also welcome at their next meeting at 7pm, Wednesday 16 July at the Baptist Church, Hythe Road.

Competition winners

More than 540 entries were received for our competitions in the last issue. The winner of a Premier Plus annual membership at the Stour Centre is Graham Sutherland, while the four winners of a Christmas tree supplied by Hole Park are Emilia Rettig, Stuart Buckland, Wendy Riley and Michelle Hollyer. See page 22 for our latest fantastic competitions.

freedomleisure where you matter

Hole Park

(From L-R) Our Armed Forces officer lead Gareth Recht along with ABC Armed Forces Members champion Cllr Peter Feacey collecting our silver award from Nigel Atkinson Esq, HM Lord-Lieutenant at a South East Reserve Forces' and Cadets' Association reception at Admiralty House at HM Naval Base in Portsmouth
Photo credit: **Kevin Poolman Photography**



Sterling support for the Armed Forces

The Ministry of Defence has awarded Ashford Borough Council a Silver Employer Recognition Scheme award as part of our ongoing support for the Armed Forces.

Ashford has a strong military history and important connections with the reservist and regular forces communities. The Armed Forces Community Covenant pledge promises that we will ensure that those who serve are treated fairly and not disadvantaged in their day-to-day lives. This includes offering injured servicemen and women and bereaved families extra support where appropriate.

We now focus on achieving a gold accreditation award while continuing to provide members of our Armed Forces community with ongoing support when they need it. Visit **www.ashford.gov.uk/armed-forces-covenant**

Are your smoke alarms in date?

Kent Fire and Rescue Service is urging people to check the expiry date on their smoke alarms, as they only have a lifespan of up to ten years. Having an in-date smoke alarm is vital in helping keep homes safe, as once they expire the sensors in the alarms become less reliable. This means that they might fail to sound in an emergency or could go off for no reason and could impact how effectively they work if there was a fire.
Visit **www.kent.fire-uk.org/smoke-alarms-10-year-lifespan**



Making the case to Eurostar

Local business leaders and politicians are calling for the return of Eurostar services, in a video produced by Ashford-based Square Stone Media.

Over 60,000 people have signed a petition, and a survey of over 500 businesses across the south east shows a strong interest for their return.

To join the Bring Back Eurostar campaign visit: **www.ashford.gov.uk/eurostar** or **bringbackeurotrains.com/**

Council tax discount

Did you know that in a two-person household if you have someone living with you who is 'severely mentally impaired' then they are not counted as adults when working out council tax? This means you could be eligible for a 25% discount.

Severe mental impairment means a permanent condition which severely affects intellectual and social functioning. This can include conditions like Parkinson's, dementia, and learning disabilities. To find out more and apply visit **www.ashford.gov.uk/severely-mentally-impaired-reductions**



Tenterden blue plaques

Keep an eye out for blue plaques in Tenterden's High Street which are coming soon so visitors and residents can learn more about famous local people and places.

The Town Council, in partnership with the Tenterden History Society and At Here Before Us, will be working on this exciting new project to design bespoke blue plaques (in the form of internal window vinyls) for the town's historic buildings.

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Community orchards



A £50,000 grant from the Coronation Living Heritage Fund (CLHF) has enabled 545 fruit trees to be planted across the borough to create or expand community orchards.

The tree planting initiative was created to mark the Coronation of HM King Charles III with parish and community councils invited to apply for fruit trees. Ashford Borough Council also created and enhanced new and existing orchards on its own open spaces.

Planting took place in January and February with the help of volunteers from groups such as Willesborough WI, the Amber Foundation, children from Ashford Oaks Primary School and local residents. Sites included Aldington, Appledore, Bethersden, Biddenden, Great Chart, High Halden, Hothfield, Kennington, Kingsnorth, Repton, Rolvenden, Shadoxhurst, St Michael's, South Willesborough and Newtown, Tenterden and Willesborough.

The orchards have been created to benefit their local communities who are welcome to enjoy the fruit they will provide. Orchards are also a wonderful habitat, supporting a range of species from pollinators and other insects to birds and mammals.

SUMMER OF FUN

Keep an eye on Victoria Park's socials for a whole host of activities this summer including: a bike show, a dog show, drumming workshops and a forest school.
@VictoriaParkABC @victoriaparkashford

Play all day!

We've been busy updating and repairing play areas across the borough to ensure young people have access to high-quality, fun and safe spaces. Recent improvements include: a full redesign and new play equipment at Rectory Way, exciting new additions at Hythe Road Recreation Ground, including a wheelchair accessible roundabout, multi-play unit and nature trail, a brand new play train and carriage at Bulleid Place and repairs and additions to Westhawk Farm Play Park, School Road play area and Henley Meadow. You can find more information and locations of all council owned play areas on our website at **www.ashford.gov.uk/play-areas**



Fancy a walk or bike ride?

Did you know that Ashford and Tenterden has a plethora of beauty spots that are just waiting to be explored on foot or by bicycle this summer? Checking out Wye's Cantii Way cycle route or a picturesque walk through Pluckley and Egerton as just a few examples. Check out the following links as a perfect starting point before you set off.

Explore Kent: **www.explorekent.org**
Kent Connected: **www.kentconnected.org**
Active Kent & Medway: **www.activekent.org**



Borough Brief hits 10,000 subscribers!

Thank you to everyone who has signed up to receive news and updates in a bitesize format from the council every month via our *Borough Brief* email newsletter. If you'd like to join, visit www.ashford.gov.uk/newsletter or scan the QR code.

Local Government Reorganisation



What does it mean for your council services?

The government published their English Devolution White Paper in December 2024, setting out their vision for simpler local government structures. They believe this can lead to better outcomes for residents, save public funds which can be reinvested in services, and improve local accountability.

The government also asked local authorities to consider how they could reshape the county's councils into a smaller group of larger unitary authorities. Something referred to as Local Government Reorganisation (LGR).

What is a Unitary authority?

Unitary authorities are a single tier of local government responsible for all local services in an area, such as Medway Council in Kent. London boroughs are also unitary authorities.

How will this affect services to residents?

Local Government Reorganisation will see a change from county council and borough councils to councils that combine all responsibilities into one body, hopefully making it easier for residents to know who delivers services.

So, while Ashford Borough Council, other district and borough councils across Kent and Kent County Council will no longer exist in a few years' time, services will still be delivered in a Unitary Authority.

Devolution

The government also wants to pass more powers down from Westminster and set up Combined Mayor Authorities. They will make strategic decisions by a Mayor for the whole region, like they have in London or Manchester.

Kent and Medway have not been selected to be part of the Devolution Priority Programme, but the expectation is that devolution will come to Kent eventually. Local leaders have asked government to allow devolution to happen in Kent around a similar time as Local Government Reorganisation.

Timescales

Kent and Medway councils submitted an interim plan for new unitary authorities to government in March 2025, with a full proposal to follow by 28 November 2025. The final decision will then be taken by the government with implementation likely in Spring 2028.

Consultation

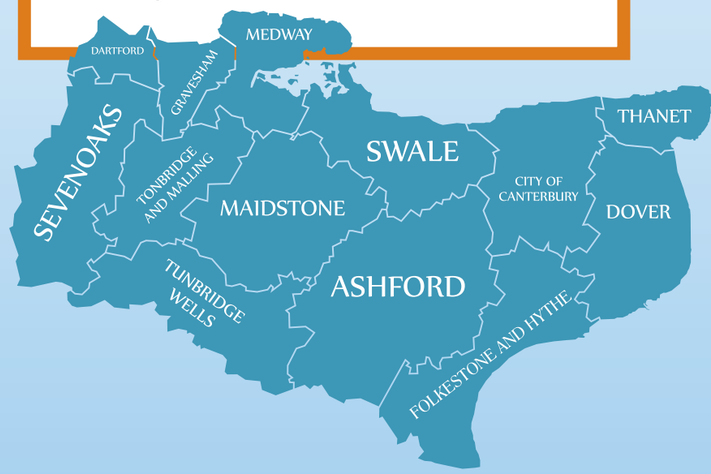
It is important that the full proposal in November will contain your views and therefore there will be resident consultation over the next few months, so watch out for how you can get involved. Once the final proposals are submitted, the government will also undertake its own consultation process and we will ensure that you are alerted to that too.

ABC priorities remain the same

In the meantime, Ashford Borough Council officers and councillors will focus on our priorities set out in the Borough Plan and progressing on important work like a new Local Plan, delivering affordable housing for local people and serving our residents.

For further information

www.ashford.gov.uk/your-council/devolution
www.gov.uk/regional-and-local-government/devolution
www.gov.uk/government/publications/english-devolution-white-paper-power-and-partnership-foundations-for-growth/english-devolution-white-paper
www.kent.gov.uk/about-the-council/devolution



Changing times - Town centre focus

Town centres are changing, with many trying to stay relevant in the face of shifting shopping habits, lower footfall and the loss of many high street names.


The Ashford Cinema.



A different kind of offer

Town centres, including Ashford, are battling to stay relevant in the face of shifting shopping habits. The move to online and out of town shopping and different work patterns, like hybrid working, are impacting spending patterns across the country, leading to a rethink about the role town centres need to play.

It is clear that town centres need to offer more than just shopping in the future if they are to remain the hub of our town and a place that business can thrive. The Town Centre Reset is an initiative which encourages active and healthy lifestyles by introducing informal play opportunities and enhanced public spaces that make attractive places to meet, sit, and enjoy a coffee or something to eat.

The show must go on!

Ashford's popular town centre cinema in Elwick Place recently celebrated its first Birthday. It is going to continue under the same management team, after the council agreed to extend the current contract.

The Ashford Cinema has become a firm favourite with film lovers and has established itself as a community cinema and event space by providing affordable offers and free parking with a cinema ticket as well as hosting a range of local community group events. Find out more at **www.theashfordcinema.co.uk**

We also offer free parking in council run car parks at certain times. **www.ashford.gov.uk/parking/general-parking/where-can-i-park/free-parking-in-the-borough**

Come and be entertained

To give people reasons to visit our town centre, the council continues to organise popular events. The **UnFRAMED Mural Festival** last spring, the **Ashford Food and Drink Festival** in the Summer, **Create Music Village** in the Autumn and **Carnival of the Baubles** in Winter all drew in thousands of visitors. They complement some of the other amazing events being organised by community groups, such as Ashford's very first **Pride event,** and will continue in 2025.

All aboard, The Supersonic Ashford Express

Younger visitors are now able to get on board a new dedicated play space which recently arrived in the raised area in front of the bandstand creating a fun, attractive space for young children and families to enjoy in town.



The type and style of the play equipment has been chosen with sustainability and accessibility in mind as well as considering things like maintenance, damage and anti-social behaviour in the design. It was paid for through government funding specifically for spending on town centres and was named by Quinn aged six from Wittersham.



Town centre monthly Market

The United Makers of Kent Food and Creative Market is held the first Saturday of every month in Ashford town centre. More than 25 stalls showcasing a variety of Kent's creative businesses and delicious street food. Discover an amazing selection of handmade crafts, taste mouth-watering dishes, and meet the creators and chefs! Open 10-4pm, it's a vibrant market not to be missed!



Did you know?

The council does not set business rates; it is assessed by Central Government's Valuation Office Agency.

www.gov.uk/government/organisations/valuation-office-agency

Most premises in the town centre are owned by private landlords, therefore the rents they charge tenants are driven by market conditions.

The council continues to seek and provide grants for businesses. We have supported a variety of established businesses and incentivised new businesses to fill empty shops.

Love Ashford? We do

We also run the Love Ashford website and social media channels, which showcase the latest offers, news and information from our town centre. **Visit www.loveashford.com**

LOVE ASHFORD

Park Mall redevelopment

Long-held plans to transform Park Mall Shopping Centre are moving forward. Despite the council's best efforts to revive its fortunes over the past decade, the centre has been in a state of decline for several years and is operating at a significant loss.

Clearing the site and replacing it with an interim surface level car park will save around half a million pounds a year in operating costs. It will also pave the way for the onward brownfield redevelopment and regeneration of Park Mall in the future. The council is working closely with existing tenants and supporting them in relocating into vacant units elsewhere in the town centre.



Explore Tenterden

Visitors to Tenterden will soon see some new noticeboards displaying an updated town map with an interactive QR code and new heritage trail leaflets showing a series of walking routes to explore in the weald.



Shop local

Totally Locally estimate that if every adult in the UK spent £5 per week in their local town, it would be worth £13.5bn to local towns, support real jobs and create better places. Using their calculation method, if every Ashford adult spent £5 a week in their town centre, it would invest £28m a year into our high streets. (2023 adult population in Ashford 107,750 - ONS Nomis). So take a friend for coffee or a bite to eat to help our town centre!

Find out what's on offer in your town centres – Visit **www.loveashford.com and www.mytenterden.co.uk**

Boost your wellbeing

Life can bring its challenges and these can sometimes lead to a detrimental effect on our health and wellbeing. If you have been suffering lately, remember that help is just around the corner and so here are just a few ways to give your wellbeing a boost within the borough.

Ashford and Tenterden Umbrella



A local charity based at The Parish Rooms, The Churchyard, TN23 1QG, which aims to support our local community by providing a safe, friendly, accessible environment for people to meet others, make friends and feel better about themselves and about life.

Pop along and you'll be able to enjoy free activities including pool and snooker, art class, table tennis, board games, crafts, subsidised day trips and a pop up café. Weekly sessions take place on Tuesday and Wednesdays 10.30am-2pm. Thursday Art Class 11am-1pm. Visit **www.ashford-tenterden-umbrella.co.uk**

Montfort Manor care home Stroke café



Taking place on the third Tuesday of each month from 10am-12pm and open to all residents, this is an opportunity for those affected by a stroke to share stories and make new friends in a relaxed and friendly environment. Enjoy free refreshments and meet the team. To attend call **01233 884302** or email **niki.young@careuk.com**



Ashford Safe Haven

Offering free face-to-face and online mental health support to anyone aged over 18, in a safe and supportive environment. No referral is needed and there's no need to book an appointment. The service is available seven days a week, including bank holidays, from 6.30pm to 11.30pm at The Paula Carr Centre, William Harvey Hospital TN24 0LZ. Visit **www.mhm.org.uk/ashford-safe-haven**

Home Start Ashford and District



A charity dedicated to supporting families with young children through challenging times to give children the best start in life. Their trained home-visiting volunteers provide practical and emotional support, helping parents to navigate difficulties such as mental health struggles, isolation, bereavement, and financial hardship.

Get in touch by emailing **info@home-start-ashford.co.uk**

The team is also looking for home-visiting volunteers to support local families. No qualifications are needed, just time, kindness, a listening ear and a desire to make a difference. Full training provided. Email **volunteers@home-start-ashford.co.uk**

The Mildred Trust - Rural Community Compassion in Action



With the launch of a new Community Shop and Community Fridge in Tenterden, The Mildred Trust is working with people in rural areas to address food insecurity and create equality of opportunity through community activities and support.

The shop and fridge launched in January at Tenterden Leisure Centre (TLC) and The Old School House Larder has expanded to include sessions at Tenterden Family Hub and TLC. The Trust will extend sessions soon, working in partnership with community members in Rolvenden, Appledore and surrounding areas.

The Community Fridge is open all week - take what you need and donate what you don't! The Community Shop is open Mondays 1.45pm-2.45pm. Everyone is welcome and you can pay £1.50 for every £5 worth of shopping up to the value of £20.

The Old School House Larder provides free food, household and hygiene products for families with children under 18. It takes place at TLC (TN30 6RA) Tuesday 5.15pm-6.15pm and at Tenterden Family Hub (TN30 6RA) Fridays 9.30am-10.30am. Visit **themildredtrust.org** or **www.facebook.com/themildredtrust**

Mid Kent Mind



Affiliated with the national charity Mind but also an independent charity, Mid Kent Mind works within communities to promote social inclusion for people who experience mental health problems. The team are passionate about promoting positive wellbeing and want to equip people with the tools they need to fulfil their potential.

Every year, they support 5,000 individuals across Ashford, Maidstone and Swale providing a range of activities to adults and children. They work with businesses, schools and healthcare professionals providing bespoke services as needed.

Weekly drop-in sessions take place at Riverside Café, Clockhouse TN23 4YN between 10am-12pm every Wednesday and provide a welcoming setting where you can meet new people and share experiences. The sessions will be available at Riverside Café until July, then the team will change venue. Visit **www.midkentmind.org.uk** or **www.facebook.com/midkentmind.**

Chatty Café Scheme



A non-profit organisation dedicated to combatting loneliness and fostering community connections, it aims to create welcoming spaces in cafes where people can come together, share conversations, and build meaningful relationships.

With two Chatter & Natter tables set up in Ashford, the initiative is growing and volunteers have seen the positive impact it has on individuals and communities alike.

Locations are JV Home Café, Javelin Way TN24 8FN: Every Tuesday, 10am-11.30am; and Ashford Town Parish Hall, Churchyard TN23 1QG: Every Tuesday, 11am-12.30pm. For information or to volunteer to host a Chatter & Natter table visit **thechattycafescheme.co.uk**

We can also come to you to improve your wellbeing



Our Eat Well, Spend Less and Wellbeing roadshows have been a great success, providing free health and wellbeing support to local residents. The events bring together partner organisations, outreach organisations and charities, in one easy-to-access place. Roadshows have already taken place in South Ashford and the Ashford Cinema, with more planned including at Tenterden Leisure Centre and Harpers Café in Victoria Park. Visit **www.ashford.gov.uk/eat-well-spend-less-wellbeing-roadshow**

SE Kitchen social supermarket has opened in Bank Street, Ashford, offering affordable, nutritious food, reducing food waste and helping to tackle food poverty.

Show your garden some love

Thinking about sprucing up your garden but not sure what to do with all the extra greenery? We've got you covered! Sign up to our garden waste collection service and let us take care of it for you.



How it works:

- We collect your garden waste every fortnight, all year round (expect for a short festive break)
- Your subscription runs for a full year from the date you sign up – no surprises
- The cost includes bin hire, so no hidden fees

What happens to your garden waste?

Everything collected in your brown bin is transformed into nutrient-rich, peat-free compost that is used as a soil improver in farming and agriculture.

Sign up or renew today on our website: www.ashford.gov.uk/garden-waste

Yes please

- ✓ Grass cutting
- ✓ Hedge trimmings
- ✓ Pruning and small branches
- ✓ Weeds and leaves
- ✓ Dead plants

No thanks

- ✗ Building rubble
- ✗ Household waste or food waste (if it's been in your kitchen it belongs in your food caddy!)
- ✗ Paints and liquids
- ✗ Logs and tree stumps
- ✗ Plant pots and polystyrene
- ✗ Turf or soil

Please remember that we do not accept garden waste in the refuse bin

Allotments

Ever thought about taking up an allotment? Although we have a waiting list, with over 400 plots it does move and we have varying sizes available to fit your needs.

You can sign up to the waiting list on our website:
www.ashford.gov.uk/allotments

Ashford Allotment Society

When you sign your allotment agreement, you'll automatically become a member of the Ashford Allotment Society. That means you can attend meetings about all thing's allotment related, visit the trading store for garden goodies and connect with other allotment enthusiasts and learn tips and tricks. You can find out more on their website: **www.ashfordallotmentsociety.org**

Let's keep our communities clean

We all have a part to play in keeping our communities litter-free. Littering not only harms the environment but also affects the beauty of the places we call home. Properly disposing of our waste helps maintain a cleaner, safer and more welcoming environment for everyone.

How can you help?

It's easy! We have plenty of public litter bins around the borough for everyone to use.

Don't forget – dog waste can go in the regular litter bins too! Please avoid tying dog waste bags to trees. While we know it's often with the best intentions to come back, bags get left behind making it unpleasant for others.

Our street cleansing teams follow a set routine to keep public spaces tidy, but if you spot a litter hotspot or an overflowing bin, let us know by heading to our website: **www.ashford.gov.uk/report.** Your reports help us better understand where extra cleaning might be needed.

Want to organise a litter pick?

We loan free equipment to individuals and groups who want to make a difference by picking up litter. We will organise a waste collection point and provide tips on how to run your event safely. Find out more on our website: **www.ashford.gov.uk/community-litter-pick**

Together, we can make a real impact and keep our borough looking its best.

Recycle your on-the-go waste

Ashford Town Centre has dual recycling and refuse bins, making it easy to recycle empty glass and plastic bottles and cans while you're out and about.

Use them or risk losing them! To keep recycling efforts effective, please only place the correct items in the recycling section – everything else belongs in the refuse section. Let's recycle our waste when we can!







Food recycling is powerful stuff

We all aim to use what we buy, but when food waste is unavoidable, recycling is the next best thing. Sadly, 53% of our food waste is still ending up in our refuse bins. Not only does recycling food waste help the environment by saving energy, but it also keeps your refuse bin fresher as it is collected weekly in an easy-to-clean caddy.

You can order your free orange and black outdoor food caddy on our website: **www.ashford.gov.uk/request-a-bin**

What can go in my food caddy? Hint: no amount of food waste is too small!

Yes please

Quick reminder to remove mouldy or out-of-date food from the packaging before placing it in your caddy.

- ✓ Meat, fish and bones (cooked and uncooked)
- ✓ Leftovers from meals
- ✓ Out-of-date food
- ✓ Fruit and veg (including peelings)
- ✓ Dairy products
- ✓ Bread, pasta and rice
- ✓ Teabags and coffee grounds
- ✓ Solid butter and lards
- ✓ Egg shells

Bonus tip: your outdoor caddy has a lockable handle to keep pests out and smells in.

For more tips on food waste recycling visit our website: www.ashford.gov.uk/food-waste



Boosting food waste recycling efforts

We're focusing on areas with low food waste recycling participation by providing residents with a helpful guide, caddy liners and a bin sticker. These resources will serve as a reminder to use your food caddy and make the most out of food waste recycling.



Making recycling easier for all

We're currently adding dry recycling and food waste recycling bins to all communal properties in the borough - meaning over 5,000 properties will gain access to these facilities.

Residents will receive a helpful flyer and first-time food waste recyclers will receive a food caddy.

Learn more about the roll out and what can be recycled on our website:
www.ashford.gov.uk/communal-property-recycling

Ashford Community Awards launched

The Ashford Community Awards 2025 have been launched to celebrate local champions, inspiring individuals who make a significant contribution to their communities.

The awards align with the Council's priorities – people, place and planet as outlined in our Borough Plan – and we are urging residents to get your nominations in today.

They provide an opportunity to honour the hard work and dedication of Ashford's finest who have enriched the lives of others in their community. It could be someone who goes out of their way to help elderly or vulnerable neighbours, or a young person who volunteers for charity.

Ashford Borough Council Chief Executive Tracey Kerly said: "Many of us know somebody who makes selfless contributions to others, people who give of themselves for others in their respective communities.

"There are people who make a substantial contribution to their community and who help enrich the lives of others. The awards will shine a spotlight on these community heroes."

An awards ceremony will take place in October at The Ashford Cinema at Elwick Place. The award categories are:

Community Champion Award:
awarded to an individual or group of people who have voluntarily helped to change the lives of others within their community.

Inspiring Young Person of the Year Award:
awarded to a person under the age of 18 who has made a positive impact in their community or achieved something exceptional.

Inclusivity Award:
awarded to an individual, group or organisation that has contributed towards making Ashford an inclusive and welcoming place for all.

Cultural Impact Award:
awarded to a person or group that has enriched the community through arts, music, heritage, or cultural initiatives.

Young & Active Award:
awarded to a person under the age of 18 who has performed exceptionally well in a physical activity or sport in the local area.

Active Community Award:
awarded to a club or group of people who have used physical activity or sport as a way of improving the lives.

Community Space Award:
awarded to a business or location that has provided a thriving space for the community.

Local Business Champion Award:
awarded to a business that has gone above and beyond to support the community.

Animal Star Award:
awarded to either a remarkable animal that improves people's lives, or an individual, group or organisation who improve the welfare of animals in the community.

Green Award:
awarded to an individual, group of people or business who improve or conserve their local environment.

Ashford Community Awards

If you or your company would like to know more about sponsoring an award, please get in touch via email at **grantsandfunding@ashford.gov.uk**

To find out more about the Ashford Community Awards 2025 and to complete a nomination form scan this QR code

Don't delay – get your nominations in today!

What's On

Anniversaries are in the air as we share some great ideas for getting out and about in our beautiful borough this summer...



Ashford Food and Drink Festival 2025 is back

Are you ready to get your taste buds tingling this summer? Then join us in Ashford Town Centre on Saturday 28 June for a day of food and drink celebration! The town will be filled with delicious market stalls, kids' crafts, street theatre and ASHFOOD! returns to Elwick Place. Enter the Great Ashford Sandwich competition, take advantage of the many offers and so much more! So, save the date and join us for a day of yummy treats and family fun! For more information, visit **www.loveashford.com**



Pilgrims Hospice summer fayre

The popular Pilgrims Hospice Summer Fayre returns on Sunday 27 July, which is a great day out for the whole family. With traditional stalls, tombolas, games and much more, there's something for everyone and it's all for a fantastic cause. Open from 12-5pm at Sandyacres, free entry for all. Visit **www.pilgrimshospice.org**

Pride Ashford celebration

After a roaring success last year, Pride Ashford will be returning on Saturday 21 June! This year's event has a Queer Makers Market in Park Mall, a parade through the town centre, live entertainment and much more! Everyone is welcome and for all information/to book your free tickets, head to **www.prideashford.com**

Spirit of Tenterden Festival



One of the most anticipated events in the borough's calendar, the Spirit of Tenterden Festival returns once again in 2025! This year's free to enter event will take place between 4-6 July at the Tenterden Recreation Ground, featuring live music, street food, a dog show and much more!

For more info visit **www.spiritoftenterden.co.uk**

Create Music Village returns

Create Music Village's month of live music is back this October, and bringing you the very best on the grass roots music scene along with big names, workshops and lots more.

Last year over 1,800 music-lovers attended Create's gigs and creative sessions throughout October at venues including Coachworks, Low Key Taproom, Revelation and The Ashford Cinema and organisers are hoping this year will offer even more venues a chance to be involved.

Check out **www.createmusicvillage.co.uk**

World in a Tent

The vibrant World in a Tent festival returns to Victoria Park in Ashford on Sunday 13 July. For more details of this free annual celebration of the multicultural communities across the borough, complete with music, dancing and food from around the globe, visit **www.facebook.com/worldinatent**



Head for Hole Park

If you're looking for a beautiful and tranquil local garden to visit this year, that's both child- and dog-friendly, then head to Hole Park Gardens just outside Rolvenden: a finalist in the historic Houses Garden of the Year Award.

Marvel at Hole Park's explosions of bright colour in its herbaceous and tropical borders in summer and spectacular golden hues in autumn. As well as a Summer Plant Fair on 1 June, garden workshops and guided tours, Hole Park is hosting a historic military ceremony on the evening of 8 July: the ABF Kent Branch Annual Beating Retreat.

The Band of the Brigade of Gurkhas will join with the Cranbrook Town Band to play during the reception, prior to the ceremony. Tickets will include wine and canapes.

See details at **www.holepark.com**

The Ashford Festival in Civic Park

Join us on Saturday 5 and Sunday 6 July 2025 in Civic Park for a weekend of local celebration. There will be live music, food and drink stalls, an arts and crafts market, and more!



Anniversaries ahoy!

It's a busy year of anniversaries for some of our best-known names in the tourism, leisure and associated sectors.

The Rare Breeds Centre is part of Canterbury Oast Trust which is marking 40 years of supporting adults with learning disabilities and autistic people. A music festival is planned on 5-7 September, complete with 80s-themed fancy dress, a cake competition and plenty of entertainment. The first day is dedicated to our supported people, their families, friends and supporters, while the other two days are open to the public. The centre is seeking musicians, bands and entertainers to take part. For details email **COT40@canterburyoasttrust.org.uk** or visit **www.rarebreeds.org.uk**

In Smarden, ***the Big Cat Sanctuary*** marks 25 years of contributing to global conservation. Its 32 acre site is home to around 40 cats spanning 11 different species. A series of special public open days will help mark its silver anniversary. For details visit **www.thebigcatsanctuary.org.uk**



Hukins Hops at St Michaels near Tenterden has two landmarks – five years of tours and its 40th anniversary of hop garlands. Hukins Hops is a fifth-generation family farm in Kent that harvest hop garlands, which are delivered direct to the door of customers. For information about tours, tastings, events and more visit **www.hukins-hops.co.uk**

The Wheels of Time marks its 10th anniversary. The children's passport scheme for local museums and heritage venues was launched by Ashford Museum and has now been extended to 57 museums across Kent. Visit **www.wheelsoftime.uk**

Rail 200 is a year-long nationwide campaign to mark 200 years of the modern railway. Kent & East Sussex Railway is marking it right through the year: from looking back at early railway history to embracing more modern times. From 18-20 July, the railway celebrates the mid-century railway with a three-day Diesel Gala featuring guest locomotives alongside the railway's own residents. A Country Fair on 6-7 September will hark back to the railway's hop picking heritage as well as celebrating its role as a custodian of a precious 10.5-mile nature corridor. Autumn sees the return of the Magic Express (25-31 October). **www.kesr.org.uk**



Ashford Model Railway Education Centre (AIMREC) is also marking the anniversary, for details visit **www.aimrec.co.uk**

Retail tourism is also in the spotlight, with the ***Ashford Designer Outlet*** marking 25 years since opening its doors in the town. See **www.mcarthurglen.com/**

Brook Rural Museum

The Brook Rural Museum is hosting summer events to keep residents entertained! There's the Hop Exhibition Launch on 24 May (2pm-5pm), the Birds of Prey Display on 14 June (2pm-5pm) and the Medieval Fayre on 19 July (11am-4pm)! More events are planned for



Stamping out abuse towards traffic wardens

Civil Enforcement Officers (CEOs), often referred to as traffic wardens, play a vital role in keeping our roads (and pavements) safe and accessible.

Unfortunately, CEOs are often subjected to unacceptable levels of verbal abuse and in some cases, even physical assaults. This kind of behaviour is completely unacceptable and is always reported to the police.

Nobody should face threats or abuse simply for carrying out their job. CEOs are members of our Ashford community, working to ensure that parking restrictions are enforced fairly.

They do not receive commission for issuing Penalty Charge Notices (PCNs); their role is to help keep roads clear and accessible for everyone, including residents and especially emergency services.

While the vast majority of residents treat CEOs with the respect they deserve, it is important to emphasise that any form of abuse or aggression towards them can have serious consequences. Assaulting a CEO can lead to a criminal record, court proceedings, and lasting repercussions.

We all have a shared responsibility to treat others with respect. CEOs, like all public servants, deserve to work in a safe and supportive environment.

Let's ensure that everyone in Ashford can carry out their roles without fear of abuse or intimidation, as nobody should have to be subjected to that in their working environment.







Charging up Ashford

The council has underlined our pledge to hit our carbon neutral target by 2030 by completing the first phase of investment in Electric Charging Vehicle Points (EVCPs) across the borough.

With more than 2,000 electric vehicles registered in the area (and counting), it's important that we have sufficient charging points for them dotted around the borough. There are now 29 EVCPs in our car parks in Ashford and Tenterden, with 53 connections.

Residents should also be aware that Kent County Council is offering people the chance to request a charging point close to your home. This can be done via the Kent County Council website at the following link: **letstalk.kent.gov.uk/on-street-ev**

While the first phase of our investment is now complete, that doesn't mean that we're done with EVCPs for the near future – far from it!

As a council, we are always looking at how we can improve things for our residents and if that means adding more EVCPs across the borough, it's certainly something we'll assess and consider.



EVCPs can be found at:

- Edinburgh Road car park (six)
- Civic Centre car park (nine)
- Vicarage Lane car park (three)
- Station Road (Tenterden) car park (two)
- Elwick Place car park (three)
- Victoria Road car park (two)
- Tenterden Leisure Centre car park (two)
- Station Road (Ashford) car park (two)





Unlocking housing logjam

An innovative solution is in sight to help get the stalled housing market moving in the River Stour catchment area in the districts of Ashford and Canterbury.

In 2020, excess nitrogen and phosphorus levels were detected in the River Stour which meanders its way through East Kent, known as the Stour catchment area. It feeds into the Stodmarsh nature reserve near Canterbury and to protect the fragile ecological balance there, Natural England banned all new housebuilding in the river's catchment area while solutions to the issue were found.

This moratorium has not only halted the development of thousands of much-needed private homes in Ashford and Canterbury, it has held up social housing schemes planned by the two authorities.

To combat this, Ashford Borough Council and Canterbury City Council have teamed up to create Stour Environmental Credits (SEC), a not-for-profit organisation. The company is controlled by a Board of Directors and is registered at Companies House.

SEC has been established to manage nutrient neutrality credits in the Stour catchment area. It will source the mitigation required to break the logjam in the housing market, enabling the buying and selling of mitigation credits to developers allowing them to demonstrate that their housing schemes are nutrient neutral and can proceed.

The scheme is basically the same as carbon trading – SEC will secure the large-scale mitigation for nitrogen and phosphorus and this 'offset' is sold to developers in credits with all the necessary documents to support planning applications for new housing schemes.

SEC will buy credits generated from a range of sources, including wetlands, improvements to agricultural practices (agriculture is the primary cause of raised nitrogen and phosphorus levels in rivers), by retrofitting water saving measures in existing homes, and conversion of septic tanks to modern package treatment plants.

As *Ashford For You* went to press, Stour Environmental Credits was moving at pace to start trading in mitigation credits as soon as possible, holding out hope that desperately-needed new housing can be provided to satisfy growing demand for good quality homes.

For more information visit www.stourenvironmentalcredits.co.uk

STOUR ENVIRONMENTAL CREDITS LTD

Keeping us and our borders safe

The service has been operating at the Sevington Inland Border Facility (IBF), just off Junction 10a, since April 2024, but what do they do? *Ashford For You* finds out.

ASHFORD Port Health

About Port Health

Ashford Port Health Authority, managed by Ashford Borough Council, is responsible for undertaking official border controls on a range of commodities, including high-risk food and feed, products of animal origin, and high-risk food and feed of non-animal origin.



As Antony Baldock, Director of Health & Wellbeing, explains: "Ashford Port Health service is committed to protecting public health and ensuring biosecurity at the Sevington BCP, which is a state-of-the-art facility. The service employs around 150 staff, many from the local area."

Inland border facilities

Inland border facilities are UK government sites where customs and document checks can take place away from port locations. A Border Control Post (BCP) is a place where animals, plants, and their products coming into the country from the EU and other third countries via seaports or airports are checked.

The Sevington BCP is the busiest in the country. Agencies operating alongside Ashford Porth Health include the Animal Plant and Health Agency, who look after plants and seeds for planting and live animals, and HMRC and Border Force, who undertake customs checks.

This gives you an idea of how important this site is, with many government agencies operating from the site, under the watchful eye of the Department for Transport, who own the site overall.

Protecting the public

The BCP ensures biosecurity by stopping goods that pose a risk, such as those from regions with known issues to human health or animal health from disease or contamination, for example from the recent Foot & Mouth outbreak in Germany.

The service plays an active role in the Association of Port Health Authorities and collaborates with other local authorities and Border Force, meaning Ashford's Port Health service plays a key role in helping enhance safety and security of the UK food chain.



Key facts

- The BCP operates 24 hours a day.
- The facility employs around 150 staff.
- It is self-funding therefore does not burden local taxpayers.
- Contributes to the local economy by employing local people.
- Provides valuable sector training and skills.

Further information can be found

The Ashford Port Health website - **www.ashfordporthealth.gov.uk**

ashfordporthealth @ashfordphealth ashfordporthealth
Sevington inland border facility - Sevington inland border facility - **GOV.UK**

Border control posts Animals, animal products and HRFNAO imports: authorised border control posts in the **UK - GOV.UK**



WIN family tickets for Biddenden Tractorfest 2025



Biddenden Tractorfest is being held in the fields of Holden Farm, Biddenden, over the weekend of 16th & 17th August 2025. While tractors remain the central attraction, there are plenty of stalls, vehicles, demonstrations, entertainment, animals and arena displays to entertain both young and old! Pair this with enticing food & drink, live music and so much more to see and do, and there is all that is needed for a fun, family day out in the Kent countryside.

Prize is one of 6 x family (2 adults, 2 children) day tickets. For more information about this wonderful event please visit **www.tractorfest.co.uk**.



BIDDENDEN TRACTORFEST

WIN a Gusbourne Estate Tour for Two, worth £240







Gusbourne's award-winning tasting room and cellar door, The Nest, is open year-round, offering a warm welcome to all visitors. Nestled just outside Appledore, Kent, the estate spans 250 acres of vineyards, meadows and woodlands. Whether you're after a casual summer dining experience in the vineyards, an expert-led tutored tasting, or a seasonal lunch at The Nest, there's something to suit every taste.

You could win two tickets to Gusbourne's most popular experience - the Estate Tour. This special event offers an in-depth look at what makes Gusbourne one of the country's leading wine producers. Your day begins with a chilled glass of sparkling, followed by a guided tour of the vineyards and a tutored wine tasting. The experience culminates with a seasonal three-course lunch, expertly prepared by Head Chef Anthony Coppard, paired with more Gusbourne wines. It's a perfect day for wine lovers - one not to be missed.

To find out more about Gusbourne wines and experiences, please visit **www.gusbourne.com.**

Terms and conditions apply.

Please scan the QR code, for your chance to win!

To enter your name in our prize draw either:

* **Email** the editorial team at **competition@ashford.gov.uk** – put **Biddenden Tractorfest competition** in the subject heading and include your full name, postal address and email. Please include a contact phone number.
* **Send a postcard or sealed envelope** with your name, address, email and contact phone number to: *Ashford For You* magazine, Communications, Ashford Borough Council, International House, Dover Place, Ashford TN23 1HU. Write **Biddenden Tractorfest competition** on the card.

We will contact the winner to request consent to provide your contact details to enable you to claim your prize.

Terms & conditions: 1. The competition is open to UK residents aged 18 years or older except employees of the Promoter, their families, agents or any third party associated with the competition. 2. The closing date of the competition is **12 noon Thursday 5 June 2025**. Entries received after this time will not be included. The prizes are non-transferable and non-refundable. There are no cash alternatives. 3. By accepting the prize you also agree to be bound by standard terms and conditions specified by the prize providers. Only one entry per person. Editor's decision is final.

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